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The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

THE want of a Historical Society of Pennsylvania has been felt for generations. Although, however, various thoughtful and patriotic individuals have taken means to preserve records of the Colony and State, a sufficient combination was not formed to achieve this purpose in an effectual manner, till December 2, 1824; which point, therefore, dates as the origin of the present association.

At an earlier period, and during the colonial condition of the settlement, extensive records were kept by more than one religious body; and a constant intercourse with England kept Pennsylvania as much before the public mind as it may have been thought to deserve; while, at an after moment, the writings of Voltaire and other imaginative authors, may perhaps have made the infant combination so noted as to do away with any urgency for a history so obscure and remote. The Revolutionary war involved interests on a larger scale, and was connected by many with theoretical views of the rights and destinies of the human race at large; and the quiet settlement in a vast forest, became, in comparison, an object of but little attention.

When the war was over, and men had time to breathe from the involvement of great interests and from desperate struggles, calmer minds soon recollected the necessity of more adequate means for the preservation of records. Then it was found that impediment arose from the divergency of views and habits. Impressions remaining from military and political struggles, and existing

differences of religious opinions and feelings, were hard to reconcile in a common labour until the period we have mentioned.

The names of the members present at the inauguration meeting were Roberts Vaux, Stephen Duncan, Thomas I. Wharton, William Rawle, Jr., Dr. Benjamin H. Coates, Dr. Caspar Wistar, and George Washington Smith. It was well understood that the late eminent William Rawle, senior, and John F. Watson, though personally absent, were to be considered as present; and they are therefore in the category of foundation members. Several other gentlemen gave their attendance at the preliminary conferences, and, it is believed, at some of the regular meetings, the minutes of which are not preserved. At the first annual election, held February 28, 1825, the Society, which had hitherto appointed Roberts Vaux as chairman, filled the place of President with the late William Rawle, senior; and the Vice Presidents were Roberts Vaux and Thomas Duncan, the Corresponding Secretary, Daniel B. Smith, and the Recording Secretary, G. Washington Smith. On the 18th of May, the Council, under the constitution, held its first meeting. In this body, besides the names already given, we find those of Dr. Thomas C. James, William Rawle, junior, Thomas H. White, Dr. Samuel Jackson, (Professor,) William Mason Walmsley, and Gerard Ralston.

On the 3d of October, 1825, ten committees were appointed, containing many names, to report, with deliberation, on as many subdivisions into which an examination of the historical records of Pennsylvania were supposed to be naturally divided. Some of these committees reported; but a larger number omitted to do so, although the inquiries thus set on foot gave rise to some subsequent papers.



260 1908 W.C.N.L.
 In December, 1825, the publication of the Memoirs was commenced. Most of these were newly compiled essays, with some orations, all intended to introduce the respective subjects; but the volumes included a few original documents. They were continued till 1840, in four volumes. In 1845-1848, a volume was issued under the title of "Bulletin;" and, after the formation of the Publication Fund, the Memoirs were resumed, with an enlarged page and in a finer style, by fifth, sixth and seventh volumes, as far as 1860.

Of later years, with the growth of Philadelphia, and by the exertions of active and influential members, the magnitude, and, it is to be hoped, the usefulness, of the Historical Society have been greatly increased. Citizens at large have taken more interest in its advancement; its library at length amounts to 7000 volumes; and a handsome collection of portraits of Governors of the State and of other distinguished individuals, with several landscape views of interesting localities, hang on its walls; the number of valuable relics in its possession is augmented, and is still growing; funds preserved for a building, for publication, for binding the books, &c., now in total amount exceed nineteen thousand dollars; and very liberal contributions in books, and, in one instance, of relics that cannot be replaced, have been received from the governments of the United States, of Pennsylvania, and of Great Britain, as well as from foreign and American Societies, and from the family of William Penn. Valuable and important legacies are promised for the future.

Still, it is necessary for truth and for the objects of the Society to say, that there is, and for a long coming period can be, no provision for the increase and completion of its library, other than in the liberality of its friends; and the Society, therefore, is yet in need of

such donations as may be worthy of preservation, and may correspond with the views of persons who value and wish to promote these inquiries. In some departments of American history the collection is, as yet, very incomplete; and the Executive Committee have it at present in view to take measures for extending it, so that the student may find, in these points, all the references needed for his researches. For the erection of a fire-proof hall, too, a "Building Fund" has been commenced, for which twenty-five hundred dollars have been collected, and it is hoped that the obvious need for such a protection may induce the liberal to aid in the undertaking.

The Publication Fund was commenced in 1854; and now amounts to upwards of fifteen thousand dollars, held in trust by JOHN JORDAN, JR., GEORGE SHARSWOOD, and OSWALD THOMPSON.

A payment of twenty dollars obtains the right to receive, during life, a copy of each publication. For Libraries this privilege continues twenty years.

There have been published since its foundation,—

In 1856, THE HISTORY OF BRADDOCK'S EXPEDITION.

In 1858, CONTRIBUTIONS TO AMERICAN HISTORY.

In 1860, RECORD OF UPLAND, AND DENNY'S MILITARY JOURNAL.

There is in preparation for publication during the next winter,

THE HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM, AND OF THE MORAVIAN SETTLEMENTS IN NORTH EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA, from original sources, in large octavo, handsomely illustrated.

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CONSTITUTION.

ARTICLE I.—This Association shall be called “The Historical Society of Pennsylvania”—and its object shall be the elucidation of the history of this State, though other branches of history shall not be excluded.

ART. II.—The Society shall be composed of such persons as have been, or may be, elected, from time to time, according to its laws and regulations.

ART. III.—The officers of the Society shall be annually chosen, by a majority of ballots, at the stated meeting in February, and shall consist of a President, four Vice-Presidents, a Corresponding Secretary, a Recording Secretary, a Treasurer, and a Librarian. The candidates for all offices shall be nominated at the stated meeting in January, and no new candidates shall be nominated at the stated meeting in February, except by unanimous consent.

ART. IV.—It shall be the duty of the President, or in his absence, of a Vice-President, to preside at the meetings of the Society, to preserve order, regulate debates, to state motions and questions, and to announce the decisions thereupon. If neither the President nor any of the Vice-Presidents be present at a meeting, the Society may choose a member to act as President at that meeting.

ART. V.—The Corresponding Secretary shall conduct and have charge of the correspondence of the Society.

ART. VI.—The Recording Secretary shall keep full and correct minutes of the proceedings of the Society, and shall have them transcribed into a book of record. He shall give due notice of any special meeting that may be called, and shall notify all members of their election.

ART. VII.—The Treasurer shall have charge of the moneys and other funds belonging to the Society. He shall collect the contributions of the members, and other income of the Society, and shall

pay such claims against the Society as shall have been duly examined and ordered to be paid. He shall annually present, at the stated meeting in January, a statement of his receipts and expenditures during the preceding year, with a full report on the financial condition of the Society.

ART. VIII.—The Librarian shall have charge of the books, manuscripts, and other property in the rooms of the Society, and shall arrange and preserve the same in proper and convenient order. He shall keep an arranged catalogue of the books and manuscripts, and where these have been presented, shall append the names of the donors. At the stated meeting in January, he shall annually present a report to the Society, embracing an account of his administration of the library, and of its condition during the preceding year.

ART. IX.—There shall be the following Standing Committees, each to be composed of three members of the Society, viz.: 1st. Committee on the Library; 2d. Committee on Publications; 3d. Committee on Finance. The members thereof, shall serve for the term of three years, one of each Committee shall be elected annually, at the stated meeting of the Society in February. Those elected in 1862, shall draw lots for their respective terms of one, two, and three years. The members of these Committees, together with the other officers of the Society, shall form an Executive Committee, of which five shall constitute a quorum, which shall meet at the Hall on the fourth Monday of every month. Members of the Society have the right to attend the meetings of every Committee, to introduce motions, and to speak thereon; and to vote at any election for members of the Society. In order that the meetings of the Society shall be free for the reading of papers or for discussions on historical and literary subjects, the business of the Society shall be transacted by the Executive Committee, any member of which, however, shall have the right to call for the ayes and nays on any question to be entered on the minutes, and to bring the same, by appeal, before the Society; in which case the list of ayes and nays, together with the notice of the appeal, shall form a part of the record, and be laid before the next meeting of the Society.

ART. X.—Vacancies which may occur in any of the above-named offices shall be filled by an election at the next stated meeting after such vacancy shall have been announced to the Society.

ART. XI.—The Society shall hold stated meetings on the second Monday evening of every month. Special meetings may be called by the President or one of the Vice-Presidents, by giving at least three days' notice thereof in not less than two of the daily newspapers published in the City of Philadelphia. The members present at any meeting shall constitute a quorum.

ART. XII.—No alteration shall be made in this Constitution unless the proposed amendments shall have been drawn up in writing and read to the Society at three successive monthly stated meetings. Nor shall any such amendment be considered as adopted unless sanctioned by the votes of three-fourths of the members present at the meeting when the question shall be taken upon its adoption.

LAWS.

ARTICLE I.—The election of members shall be by ballot, at any stated meeting of the Society or of the Executive Committee. Those members shall be deemed qualified voters at the meetings and elections who have paid their dues to the Society. A member may at any meeting nominate, in writing, a candidate for membership, and if the said candidate shall receive a majority of the votes cast, he shall be deemed duly elected. On request of three members, the balloting on any candidate shall be postponed to the next stated meeting. A viva voce vote on the election of a member may be taken, if so ordered. The balloting being gone through, the boxes shall be opened, and the result of the poll declared by the presiding officer. The written nominations of the members elected shall be preserved by the Secretary for future reference.

ART. II.—Such members as reside within the City of Philadelphia, shall pay an annual contribution of *three dollars*. The payment of *twenty dollars* at one time, by a member, shall constitute him a member for life, with an exemption from all future annual payments. Any member liable to an annual contribution, who shall neglect or refuse to pay the same for the term of two years, may by the action of the Executive Committee, have his rights as a member suspended, and in case the said arrears are not paid when the third annual contribution shall have become due, the member-

ship of such defaulting member may then be forfeited, and his name stricken from the roll.

ART. III.—On the Society being informed of the death of a member, the fact shall be entered on the records, and a member may be appointed to prepare an obituary notice of the deceased. The obituary notices of members shall be read to the Society, and they shall be bound together whenever they are sufficiently numerous to form a volume.

ART. IV.—The Committee of Finance shall have the general superintendence of the financial concerns of the Society; they shall audit and certify all bills for payment by the Treasurer; they shall always have access to his books, accounts, and vouchers, and shall examine and audit his annual report, as well as those of the Trustees of the special funds of the Society. They shall consult with the Treasurer, and authorize and direct the investment of surplus funds.

ART. V.—The Committee of Publication shall superintend the printing and distribution of such publications as may be ordered to be made by the Trustees of the Publication Fund. They shall have power to call on the Librarian for his assistance in the performance of their duties.

ART. VI.—The Committee on the Library shall confer with and assist the Librarian in the general care and management of the library, and shall control the disbursement of such appropriations as may be made by the Society for its increase and maintenance, as well as in the disposition and arrangement of the books, maps, documents, and paintings belonging to the Society.

ART. VII.—All Special Committees shall be chosen, on nominations made by members present, unless the Society shall otherwise direct. The member first named of any committee shall be the chairman.

ART. VIII.—A majority of any committee shall be a quorum. Special committees shall report at the meeting next after that at which they were appointed, unless otherwise ordered by the Society. All reports shall be in writing, and signed by the members agreeing thereto.

ART. IX.—The Librarian shall attend at the Library, at such hours as the Executive Committee shall, from time to time, direct, and the rooms shall be opened on every Monday evening, between the hours of 8 and 10, except during June, July, and August.

ART. X.—No alteration or amendment of the laws and regulations of the Society shall be made or considered, unless the same shall have been duly proposed and fairly drawn up in writing at one stated meeting of the Society, and laid over for consideration and enactment at the next stated meeting; nor shall any such alteration, amendment, or regulation be considered as passed or binding upon the members, unless the same be sanctioned by the vote of three-fourths of the number of qualified members then present.

ART. XI.—The laws and regulations contained in the foregoing articles shall be in force from and after the time of their adoption by the Society, and thereafter all other laws and regulations heretofore made by the Society, and not contained in its Constitution, shall be, and the same are hereby repealed.

ORDER OF BUSINESS.

- I. The chair taken by the presiding officer.
- II. New members presented, and visitors from other Societies introduced.
- III. Records read of last meeting, and of any subsequent special meeting.
- IV. Correspondence read.
- V. Donations and other additions announced :
 - a. To the Library.
 - b. Other donations or additions.
- VI. Reports and communications on historical and literary subjects.
- VII. Obituary notices of members read, and announcement of the decease of members made and acted on.
- VIII. Balloting for candidates for membership.
- IX. Reports on business from officers and committees.
- X. Deferred business. H243 78 522
- XI. New business.
- XII. Minutes of the meeting read and submitted for correction.
- XIII. The Society adjourned by the presiding officer.





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